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GREEN VENTURE

Community Green

GO GREEN, SAVE GREEN.

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C. Kurucz, Editor

Green Venture:
Green Venture is a not-for-profit community organization serving the Greater Bay area. We are dedicated to environmental awareness and sustainable economic development.

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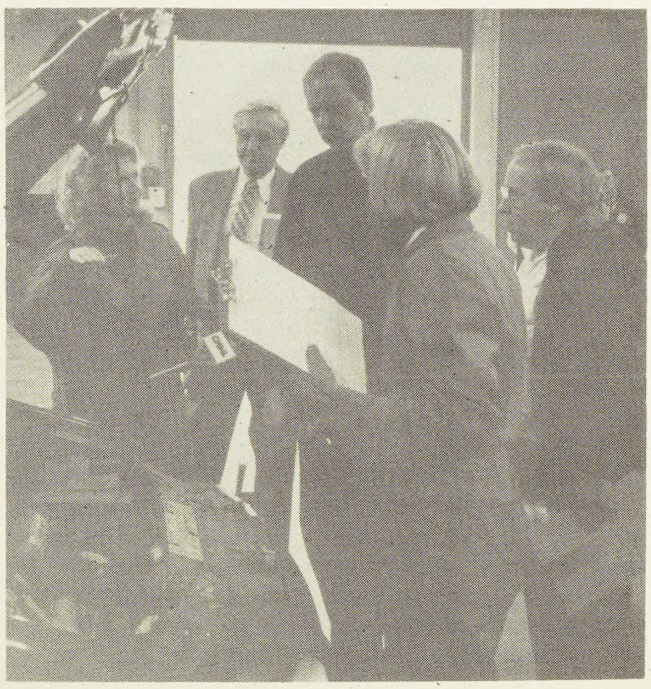
Clear the Air

It may be hard to believe, but each and every car emits about 4 tonnes of pollutants annually. While cars are much less polluting today than they were even 30 years ago, there are more cars on the road today. As Hamilton-Wentworth continues to grow, we are spending more time in our vehicles, and driving longer distances at slower speeds, all contributing to the regional smog problem.

Air quality has become a real concern, as studies link air pollution to health problems such as respiratory infections, colds, asthma and some types of cancer. Poor air quality can also affect your pets, wildlife and livestock. Even the agricultural industry hurts when air quality is poor, as plant growth is stunted and yields are reduced.

Maintaining your car's pollution control system – the catalytic converter and other equipment that removes smog-forming pollution from the tailpipe – will not only help fight smog, but help your car run better and improve gas mileage.



Green Venture's "Clear the Air" program will offer FREE and VOLUNTARY vehicle emission testing throughout the Regional Municipality of Hamilton-Wentworth from May to the end of August. Vehicles do not always perform as well on the road as they do in prototype tests. Inspections and vehicle emission testing can inform motorists when pollution control devices are malfunctioning and when fuel is being wasted. If your vehicle test is unsatisfactory, having it repaired may save you 6 to 13% in gasoline costs. In many cases, fuel savings will completely offset the repair costs.

(Continued on page 2...)

A Silver Lining to Every Rain Cloud

Water is something most of us do not worry about. We turn on the tap and it just flows out. We may be oblivious to how much we actually use until we pay the bill. It is estimated that during the summer, the average household consumes 100,000 litres of water just for outside use alone. At a cost of 74 cents for each 1000 litres of municipal water, conservation makes economical sense.

As well as lowering household bills, catching rain in a rain barrel can also extend the life of local infrastructure, and provide for gardens and lawns during summer droughts. The ministry of Environment and Energy calculated that an average home could collect about 87,000 litres of rain in a rain barrel between April and September in the Toronto area.

(Continued on page 2...)

Stats Can...

Households and the Environment

The good news.....

The latest report (1994) indicates a significant increase nationally over 1991 in access to recycling programs and household composting, and high utilization of most of these programmes. There has also been an increase in the use of programmable thermostats, low-flow showerheads, ultra low-flow toilets, and compact fluorescent light bulbs.

And the bad news.....

- chemical pesticide use has increased, from 28 to 31 per cent of households nationally (34.3 per cent in Ontario!)
- disposable diaper use has increased
- public transit, cycling, and walking have declined relative to driving as a principal method of travel to work

Clear Air...

(Continued from page 1)

Some pollution repairs improve safety. Faulty equipment responsible for excess pollution can also cause such hazardous driving conditions as surging and stalling.

When pollution controls malfunction under warranty, the auto maker must pay for repairs.

Something's in the Air

The percentage of each of these pollutants found in our air come from light-duty vehicles in Ontario:

Carbon Monoxide 70%
Hydrocarbons 29%
Oxides of Nitrogen 43%
Particulates 23%

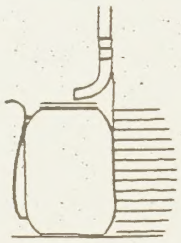
Source: The Lung Association of Hamilton-Wentworth & the Hamilton-Wentworth Air Quality Initiative.

The benefits of clean air are substantial. Economists estimate unhealthy air costs billions of dollars every year in health care and lost work time. And the benefits go far beyond money, particularly for those with breathing problems, the elderly and children.

Green Venture will be providing free and voluntary car emission testing clinics this summer.

Rain Barrels...

(Continued from page 1...)



Good gardeners have always known that plenty of rainwater is also the secret to lush greenery. Why, then, do we continue to feed our lawns and gardens with chlorinated drinking water and expect the same results?

The advantages of connecting your eaves trough to a rain barrel include: a source of free water for washing the car and other outdoor jobs; non-chlorinated water is better for growing flowers and vegetables; warm rain water reduces shock and damping-off in delicate transplants; and water is available during restricted watering times.

Green Venture's rain barrels are made of sturdy recycled food-grade plastic and hold about 220 litres. The lids are child- and animal-proof and also prevent algae growth which keeps the mosquitos away. The barrels have a built-in connection for a garden hose with shut-off valve, and an over-flow tube that can direct water away from foundations.

Make an appointment and our professionally trained residential assessor will come out to your home at NO COST, to explain these and other conservation methods tailored to your household, in person! It is part of our "Healthy Plants for Healthy People" campaign. Just call and ask for a Home Green-Up.

Green Venture's mobile emission testing clinics will be at the following locations this summer. Hours are 9 am to 4 pm except where noted.

Mountain Plaza Mall (Upper James and Fennel) June 23-27
Town of Dundas at the Olympic Ice Pad July 2-4
University Plaza, Dundas July 5 (9 am - 5 pm) and July 7-8
Town of Glanbrook Sports Complex July 9-12
Valley Park Recreational Centre (Stoney Creek Mountain) July 14
Fiesta Mall, Stoney Creek July 15-16
Home Depot, Ancaster Power Centre July 23-26

Check the Hamilton Spectator for more dates and locations!

Clear the Air is a project funded by Environment Canada's Action 21 Community Funding Program, the Region of Hamilton-Wentworth, Mohawk College, Kelly Autobody and others, so that it can be brought to you at no charge!

Green Q & A

Your natural gardening, energy, water, and waste questions are answered.

Q: How can I go about removing my name from junk mail lists?

A: Once you are on a mailing list for a charitable organization, you must write directly to that charity to have your name removed from the list.

Most reputable charities and organizations will check with the Canada Direct Mail Association before adding new names to a mail campaign. To prevent your name from being listed in future junk mail or charity solicitations, write to:

Canada Direct Mail Association
1 Concord Gate
Suite #607
Don Mills, ON M3C 3N6

There are do not MAIL and do not PHONE options. You will be required to give your full address and telephone number and the request is good for 3 years.

Q: How can I tell when my compost is ready to be harvested? How do I use it?

A: It can be anywhere from 2 months to more than a year after you start composting your kitchen and yard wastes before there is an appreciable amount of finished compost at the bottom of the pile.

When the material looks like dark brown crumbly soil, it is ready to be used as a soil conditioner. Most of the original identity of the materials will be lost, but if you see a few pieces of recognizable food scraps it is still fine to use.

There are several ways that finished compost may be used. Spring and Fall are ideal times for applying it, since the nutrients will then be available for the whole growing cycle that follows.

Dig finished compost into your soil before planting vegetables and flowers. Use it as a mulch or top dressing around shrubs and trees to help retain moisture, smother weeds and prevent soil compaction. Nutrients will leach into the soil below with each rainfall. Berries and grape vines have masses of roots very close to the surface of the soil. These roots will benefit from compost applied directly to the soil surface. A thick layer of straw or bark chips on top of the compost will also help to keep weeds down.

Fall is a good time to use it as a top-dressing for lawns. Pass it through a half-inch wire screen and then directly apply to your lawn. A light raking will spread it evenly and get it down near the grass roots where it will promote lush growth. It can also be used as part of a seed starting mix.

For a rich and light potting soil for house plants, mix finished compost with equal amounts of soil and sand. Bedding flats or starting flats should have no more than 1/3 (screened) compost mixed with 1/3 soil and 1/3 sand, perlite or vermiculite.

Make "compost tea" in two ways: 1) mix compost with equal parts water or 2) place the compost in a burlap bag, insert it in a barrel of water and let it steep for a few days. The nutrient-rich tea can then be used to water plants, especially nice for containers.

Give some to a friend and get them started on composting!

Q: What can I do to control composter odours?

A: A properly managed compost pile should have no other odours than a sweet "earthly" smell. If you are experiencing unpleasant odours your pile may be anaerobic (little oxygen available for the work of decomposition), or may contain materials with too much nitrogen, which give off an ammonia odour upon decomposing.

To ensure your compost pile gets the necessary amount of oxygen, turn your pile with a pitchfork or compost aerator (available at Green Venture) at least every second week. More frequently if you have a problem. Add dry materials such as leaves, sawdust, or some unbleached paper products, to dry the pile if it is excessively wet. It should have the moisture of a well wrung out sponge.

Materials such as grass, green leaves, kitchen scraps (anything moist and green) contain nitrogen. Grass clippings, especially tend to mat and become smelly if too many are added at once. Instead, allow them to dry in the sun and add them in thin layers.

Never put fats, meats, or dairy products in the composter.

If you have an energy, water, waste, or natural gardening question, drop us a line and it may be answered in the next issue of Community Green.

Our Mission:

Green Venture is a not-for-profit organization promoting efficiency, prevention and conservation, thereby improving the quality of life in our community.

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School's Out!

Looking for Summer activities for the kids? Your local library, information and recreation centres may provide more than enough to choose from. The following local summer activities emphasize environmental awareness and outdoor education:

Project Green

A unique summer day camp experience, created to inspire a sense of joy and wonder for the natural world and a commitment to Earth-friendly action. Young people ages 7-13 will unravel the mysteries of nature and take an active role in protecting the environment through hands-on nature studies, crafts, environmental field trips, outdoor games & exploration!

July - Oakville @ Appleby College
August - Hamilton @ McMaster University
Call Catherine at (905) 637-1537

Canterbury Hills

Residential and Day Camp for ages 5-14, and Leadership-in-Training for those 15 and older. CHC is a land based camp focusing on the environment and experiential learning. Activities include high and low ropes courses, archery, sports, crafts, swimming, awesome evening campfires, and more!

July 4 - August 22
@ Canterbury Hills
Call Dawn at (905) 527-1316

Camp Discovery

Summer adventures for ages 9-12 years and a teen camp for 13-15 year-olds.

Day trip backpacking on the Escarpment, orienteering, co-operative games, forest, and stream explorations are some of the exciting adventures that await this year's campers!

July 7 - August 22
@ the Dundas Valley Visitor Centre
Call Sandy at (905) 627-3140.

Hooked on Fishing 1-day workshops and 3-day camps also available at various conservation sites.

Camp Omni

Explore Ancaster's outdoors. Swimming daily, hiking, stream studies, environmental games, crafts, sports, orienteering, and theme days!

July 2 to August 22
@ Lions Outdoor Pool Meeting Hall.
Call (905) 648-4571

Kids Summer Fun

The Royal Botanical Gardens provides entertaining and educational hands-on summer programs for ages 2-15. Everything from nature arts and crafts to survival skills to family camp-outs!

July 7-Aug 22
@ RBG Centre
and Nature Interpretive Centre.
Call (905)527-1158.

Upcoming Events:

July 5,19,26,27: Volunteer Marsh Planting, 9am to noon. Help restore Cootes Paradise marsh - bring your friends! Please call the Bay Area Restoration Council office at 525-9140 ext.27405 to register.

July 6, 13: Rose Faire, 11am -5pm, rain or shine. This Royal Botanical Gardens event will feature a vendor market place, garden tours, local artists and a children's activity area. Hendrie Park, across from RBG centre. 527-1158 for info.

July 12-13: Aquafest, 7th annual! Come enjoy the weekend at Bayfront Park. See displays about Hamilton-Wentworth's Vision 2020.

July 12: Butterflies in the Valley, 1pm. Guided hike and search for the over 40 butterfly species that live in the Red Hill Valley. Meet at Elizabeth Bagshaw School, at the west end of Albright Rd, off Mount Albion Rd. 664-8796 for info.

July 20: Festival of Herbs, 9am - 6pm. Fine craftsmanship, one-of-a-kind gifts, herbal food and cosmetic products, topiary and rare plants,. Green Venture presentation on composting and organic gardening at 3pm. Harper's Gardening Centre at 1039 Wilson Street East, Ancaster. Phone 648-2157 or 528-6673.

July 24: Family Campfire Night, 8-9:30pm. Join the campfire by the Pond in the Dundas Valley Conservation Area for some songs, stories, and marshmallows. Bring lawn chairs and blankets. $5 per family. Sandra Root at 627-3140 for info.

July 26: Night Flyers, 9pm. Guided evening walk through the Red Hill Valley, highlighting bats, owls, and perhaps a flying squirrel. Meet by the creek behind Rosedale Arena (south end of Cochrane Rd.) Don McLean at 664-8796 for info.

Jul 26, Aug 16, Sept 13: Spencer Creek Rehabilitation. Contact Harold Becker at 389-0290 for details.

1st week of August :Firefly Festival, evening event. Contact Friends of Red Hill Valley–end of July to confirm date and location, 664-8796.

September 6, 7: Herb and Harvest Festival, 10am - 5pm, rain or shine. This Royal Botanical Gardens event is the largest festival of its kind in Canada! Geared towards the whole family, the event will include a vendor marketplace, the 3rd annual pesto competition, children's area, wine and beer tasting, a gourmet food pavilion, and various demonstrations. Hendrie Park, 527-1158 for info.

Wednesday evenings, May to August: Hamilton Naturalists' Club-led Evening Hikes. Throughout the summer, hikes are organized in natural areas of the region, led by knowledgeable club members and focusing on some aspect of the local environment. Open to visitors and children are encouraged to attend. Call 547-5116 for details.